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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

ENFORCEMENT CONFIDENTIAL

DATE: Feb 7, 2002

SUBJECT: Downers Grove, IL Contaminated Groundwater

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Today's archival search of microfiche files at the Downers Grove Public Library was productive of information about a train derailment in the area of El Industrial Park.

On March 7, 1973 the front page headlines of the Downers Grove Reporter "Train Derailment Smashes Belmont Crossing". That issue of the paper reported "Eighteen cars of a 97 car Chicago to Seattle freight train derailed Belmont road crossing at 1:33 p.m. Sunday afternoon smashing the crossing and destroying the platform on both sides of the track and causing the waiting room building to collapse.

Many local residents considered the latter no great loss, since the was quite old and dilapidated. Cause of the wreck was a broken wheel the 156th car of the west bound train said Burlington Northern officials.

The wreck which resulted in about 6 of the freight cars piling up like jackstraws right at the Belmont crossing put all 3 railroad tracks

action Sunday.....The first task for the railroad was of course, clear tracks and the freight cars were shoved to either side of the right

The train carried general merchandise, including color TV sets, some which spilled at the crossing. DG police guarded the area throwing a cordon around the scene within minutes to prevent looting.

The DG fire department put out a small fire in one of the freight cars that started after the smash-up. No one was injured but 4 cars parked adjacent to the track were damaged..."

I made arrangement to have copies of this old article reproduced for each but the photos that appear on the front page did not come out well at all. I traveled to the Reporter hoping to gain access to the photos that appear on the front page and others that may have been taken the day of the derailment. An employee went into the basement of the newspaper looking for any photos but none could be found.

I located a person who arrived at the scene of this accident almost immediately. He recalls that the damaged railcars were buried on the spot by Burlington Northern crew members and thinks that most were piled on the south side of the track. He describes it as being under the parking lot for the Metra commuter station at Belmont Avenue. He also recalled that the engine of the train was a diesel locomotive but has no memory about whether the engine derailed.